Christian Courier

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Christians give cautious support to birth report

Concerns remain about embryo research, anonymous fathers

Irene Bom

OTTAWA — The royal commissioners assigned to study new reproductive technologies started out four years ago by agreeing on an ethical measuring stick by which to evaluate their findings.

This "ethic of care," they stated, would give "priority to the mutual care and connectedness between people and communities" when assessing the use of any given technique.

Now, after the release of the final report late last month, there are mixed responses about the extent to which that set of ethics influenced the recommendations.

Two "major concerns" for Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) were profiteering in reproduction technologies and sex-selective abortion, says Diane Marshall, a therapist at the Institute for Family Living in Toronto who helped CPJ draft a brief to the commission in 1991.

Good and bad news

Marshall says she was "really glad" that a quick scan of the recommendations showed that the commission came down heavily against both of those activities.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) in a press release praised the commission for clamping down on human clone research and proposing a federal licensing watchdog. But the voice for 27 denominations, including the Christian Reformed Church, opposed several recommendations, including one to allow experiments on embryos in the first 14 days of life with informed consent of parents.

The report states that seven per cent of Canadian couples are infertile (judged as couples which have been living together for two years without contraception and in which the woman is aged 18-44).

The commission recommends that inexpensive donor insemination (using sperm donated to a sperm bank) be equally available to all women and be publicly funded. The more expensive and less successful in vitro fertilization (retrieved eggs are fertilized, then inserted into the womb), on the other hand, should only be offered to and funded for women with blocked fallopian tubes.

Both CPJ and the EFC opposed the use of sperm banks in which the genetic father donates sperm with no ties to the child. "Without the loving contributions of parents, not only on genetic, but also on social, ethical and spiritual levels, children are robbed of their birthright," states the CPJ brief.

PHOTO: FAMILY BY MARGARET MEAD AND KEN HEYMAN

New birth technologies mean good news for more infertile couples but also more ethical questions.

CPJ called for use of reproductive technologies only "in relationships of mutuality," while the EFC urged that "factors such as marital status" help determine access.

Related stories on page 2...

Evangelical rancher ruffles Reformed feathers

Alberta farm group reacts to message to pray over cursed land

John Pater

EDMONTON — Christian farmers in Alberta didn't get what they had hoped for or what they were used to when they called upon an American evangelical Christian to be their keynote speaker.

"Lacked depth," "Real weak," "Not enough substance" were some of the reactions to John L. Moore, a rancher and author from Montana. But Moore's presentations also provided a window into the thinking of some in the evangelical community on issues of land stewardship and the environment.

Moore was the keynote speaker for the 18th annual "Earthkeeping" convention. (Earthkeeping is the new name of the Christian Farmers Federation of Alberta. The name change happened last year.) The convention took place Nov. 24 and 25 just south of Edmonton.

The president of Earthkeeping, Vern Gleddie, says he first heard of Moore in a review of one of his books in *Christian Courier*. Gleddie says upon reading that book, *Loosening the Reigns*, he was impressed with the way Moore seemed to connect the written Word of God and Creation. On that basis, Moore was invited.

It didn't take long in hearing Moore to recognize his strongly conservative evangelical leanings. "You have to know Jesus first," he said. "How can you talk stewardship if you don't know salvation?"

Moore was surprised to find that few in the audience had even heard of any of the U.S.-based evangelists he quoted throughout his talks. And after hearing several other speakers he commented on the intellectual level of the discussions.

"He lacked in depth for what it means on the farm," says Lambert Tuininga, a farmer from Neerlandia, and a long-time member of this organization. "We need to tell the gospel, sure," he says, "but the gospel needs to permeate down to the farm."

Prayer against the curse

Tuininga was also disappointed in how Moore seemed to "spiritualize" the land. At one point Moore described how he believes a piece of land or a building can be cursed due to evil actions or sins being done there in previous generations.

Moore said he came to believe his land was cursed after seeing poor production year after year on his ranch. Moore said those feelings were confirmed when he delved into the lifestyle of his grandmother and when he became suspicious about odd rock formations in a creek that runs through his land. "I believe that the Spirit of God needed to be called on to redeem the land and remove the curse," he said. Moore said since he's prayed over his land, his ranch has been successful.

Lambert Tuininga doesn't

See **MOORE'S**—*p.20*

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Thinkbit

"There is an incredible loss of community in our churches."

George VanderVelde at the "Vision for the Nineties Conference II"

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News

Certain ethics 'trumped others,' says dissenting commissioner

Irene Bom

TORONTO — "There definitely seems to have been, not an abandonment of the ethics, but a case of one or two trumping all the others."

So observes Suzanne Scorsone, a member of the royal commission on reproductive technologies about the distance between the commission's guidelines and several of the final recommendations.

"Nobody wanted to see lower-income people denied access to certain procedures, so they [the other commissioners] went to an extreme to provide access, allowing only medical barriers.

"The same thing happened with the guideline of autonomy for women — they decided that it should apply in every case by denying judicial intervention in any pregnancy," notes Scorsone, also director of Catholic Family Life in Toronto.

In a separate report included in the two-volume commission publication Scorsone distanced herself from six of the commission's final recommendations. She criticized the report's sex education guidelines for not mentioning such "key concepts" as commitment and child rearing and for "portraying parents as a promising but adjunct resource" to government agencies.

As well, she said the report's recommendation that health care facilities should not refuse access to infertility options on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation discriminates against those run by religious bodies.

"To consider such factors relevant or irrelevant is, either way, a social/ethical opinion and choice," she argued.

Embryo adoption

Scorsone also opposed the suggestion that "embryos be deliberately brought into being for the purpose of research" and suggested that frozen embryos whose parents have died or divorced "should be offered for prenatal adoption to an infertile woman" like children who are Crown wards.

Campaign Life spokesperson Sabina McLuhan says she was "appalled, but not surprised" that the report did not oppose abortion.

"How can we even begin to talk about reproductive technology until we've acknowledged the right to life of the unborn?" she asks.

Scorsone disagrees. "This is not an abortion question. That was not part of the commission's mandate," she says.

Many questions about reproductive technology "don't depend on one's view of the personhood of the fetus," she asserted, adding that a full-blown discussion of abortion "would have made if difficult for us [the commission] to go on" because of deep-seated differences on that issue.

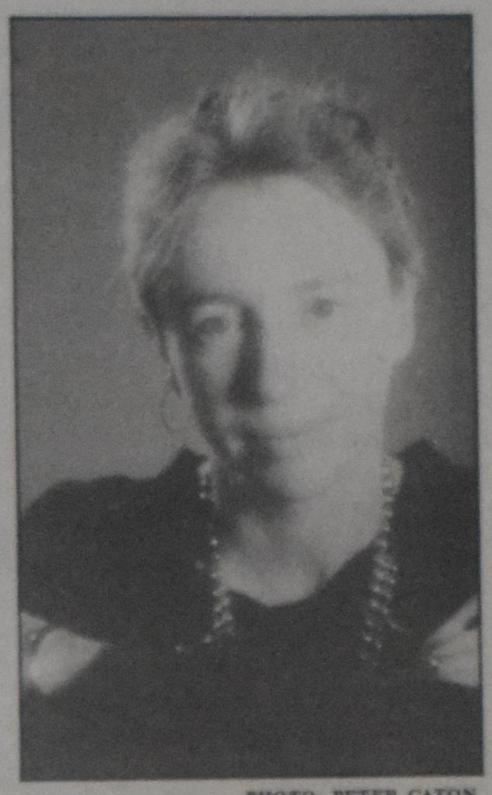


PHOTO: PETER CATON

Suzanne Scorsone

Beneficial, though harmful

The report calls prenatal diagnosis (PND) for genetic disorders with informed choice "beneficial," even though "if a couple does not consider termination an option, the benefits of prenatal testing are outweighed by potential harm to the child."

McLuhan praised Scorsone's statement in her dissenting report that abortion of babies with genetic disorders "seems to me to be a final discrimination against the disabled."

"We suspect that in practice PND is used more often for a search and destroy' mission, not for therapeutic purposes," says McLuhan, adding that "sometimes healthy babies are diagnosed as having defects, too."

But Scorsone denies that there is such a direct link between PND and abortion. "If there were no PND, even more parents would abort because of the fear of defects," she asserts, adding that such tests allow for prenatal surgery or preparations for special care at birth.

Fascinated by power

According to gynecologist Robert Walley, the government should encourage research into tubal surgery and other "more natural" reproductive technologies, such as one being funded by pro-life groups in Great Britain. That procedure retrieves eggs and then tries to fertilize them inside the womb, says the professor at Memorial University in St. John's, Nfld., who addressed the commission on behalf of Canadian Physicians for Life.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CAMPAIGN LIFE

Sabina Mc Luhan

"Researchers are still fascinated by the power to create life outside of the body in a test tube," Walley says.

Dr. Bartha Maria Knoppers, a former Christian Reformed member interviewed last year by CC, was also on the commission. She did not dissent in writing to any of the recommendations and could not be reached in time to comment.

In vitro procedure respects life, says pastor's wife

Irene Bom

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO — For nine years a southwestern Ontario pastor and his wife have wrestled with the same questions as the royal commissioners.

The couple, who asked not to be identified, married 10 years ago and "wanted to have children fairly soon," says Judy (not her real name).

After receiving medication to increase her egg production and hormone levels, Judy gave birth to a healthy baby girl in 1986.

"We were relieved and thought our conception problems were over," says Judy.

But the couple discovered the opposite when this time around, the same dosages did not result in a pregnancy.

Doctors in a fertility clinic in London, Ont., suggested the couple try a new procedure called intra-uterine insemination.

When that, too, failed, the couple went on to try in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Under 20 per cent chance

In that procedure doctors retrieve eggs from the woman's ovaries, fertilize them with the partner's sperm and then insert the embryos into the womb. In just under 20 per cent of cases one embryo (or more) implants itself in the uterus lining and is delivered nine months later as a full-grown baby.

Pro-life groups condemn the procedure because of the risk to the embryo and because the extra embryos — only several are inserted into the womb for fear of multiple births — are destroyed or frozen for use later. (Unfertilized eggs cannot be frozen separately.)

"As Christians we needed to think through the ethics of what we were doing," says Judy.

"As we prayed, we came to understand that God honors attempts to create life, and that anything that worked toward that ultimate purpose was allowable."

Clinic workers gave Judy and her husband the option of destroying extra embryos or of freezing them for later pregnancy attempts; they chose the latter.

But as it turned out, the question of extra embryos never became an issue for the couple. None of Judy's eggs fertilized in the first month. On second try all three eggs fertilized but did not "take" in the uterus. After the third time Judy had a positive pregnancy test, but several days later lost the baby.

The couple has now listed their name with public and Christian adoption agencies and 15 private physicians.

Reminded each morning

The whole process has been anything but easy, says Judy.

"It's really easy to get engulfed in the problem of infertility. Every morning you take your temperature [to determine your point in monthly cycle] and you're reminded of your problem."

But the couple says they have also learned along the way.

"We've realized in a new way how precious life is — it made us more angry about abortion," she says.

Their families and church members have supported their attempts to conceive, says Judy.

"My sister even offered to be a surrogate parent for us," she notes, adding that "there might be times when that would be ethically okay."

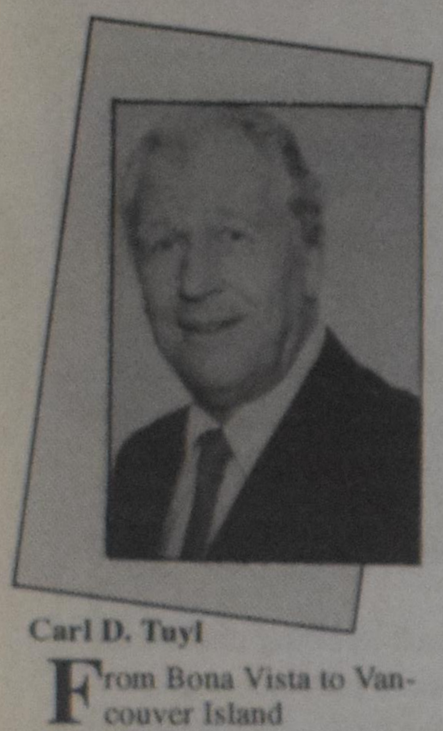
Judy says she's concerned that the commission's report suggests cutbacks to IVF funding.

"IVF is a legitimate program. How can they suggest cutting funding for it and continue to pay for abortions?" she asks.

"Infertility is just another medical condition and treating it isn't that much different than saving a life," Judy adds.

Comment

PRESSREVIEW



Carl D. Tuyl

From Bona Vista to Vancouver Island municipalities are figuring out how to get in on the federal $2 billion infrastructure booster shot. If memory serves me well, I believe we had the same injection into municipal budgets in the centennial year 1967. A lot of towns wound up with buildings that are now about ready for the wrecking crew.

Way in the West, around Nanaimo they're stuck with a subterranean fortress that was meant to be the emergency regional government headquarters. Since its construction in 1963 it was known as the "Diefenbunker." It is now just a great big hole in the ground.

★ ★ ★

In spite of a whole lot of cosmetic rhetoric from Numero Uno the cabinet could not do much more than accept the NAFTA deal. A unilateral declaration about the right of Canada to sovereignly determine its energy policies made about as much sense as mouth-to-mouth resuscitation of a dead skunk. It doesn't improve the situation and it keeps smelling bad.

★ ★ ★

Unless there's a last minute reprieve the RCMP band will play for the last time in Victoriaville, Que., on Dec. 14 and will officially disband (no pun intended) in March 1994. Culture is usually the first victim of a shrivelling economy. Pretty soon, local symphony orchestras, opera companies and museums will vanish like beer in a crowded pub, and we will be left with Nintendo stores and pizza parlors.

★ ★ ★

The beyond-a-doubt double-dip loser of the week is Shoppers Drug Mart chain, which refused the March of Dimes collection containers because March of Dimes employees get their drugs from a mail-order pharmacy.

★ ★ ★

Ever heard of the "body mass index"? It is, or rather was, a weight-control guideline for Canadian Forces' personnel. Several complaints against the "body mass index" to the Human Rights Commission have been upheld and there is now no more "body mass index."

David Letterman also recently spoke of body mass. He said that you have too much mass when the doctor tells you that your weight is perfect... for a person 17 feet tall. Another sign of the onset of obesity is when you sweat gravy.

★ ★ ★

There is an interesting conflict going on in Austin, Texas. The Silicon Valley giant Apple Computer wants to build an $80 million office complex there which would create 1,500 jobs in the community. But the country commissioners have voted against the agreed-upon tax break for the company because it confers health benefits on unmarried partners of its employees.

★ ★ ★

A columnist of the *Montreal Gazette* writes that studies (one was done by the Centre of Disease Control in Atlanta) show that some illnesses are connected to a lack of sense of humor. Tightness of the anal sphincter maybe?

★ ★ ★

Air Canada paid a firm in San Francisco $800,000 to put its Maple Leaf logo on a forest green background. I would have done that for half the money. Mrs. Mulroney, whose hesitant steps toward a career as a second-hand furniture sales person stumbled early on, is now a director on the board of a movie distributing company.

★ ★ ★

Bosnia's Muslim-led government said for the first time that it would agree to divide Sarajevo with rival Serbs if that would save lives among the besieged population. Well, get on with it!

★ ★ ★

All money-lusting eyes are looking at China. China's Gross National Product is up in the ozone layer, with a heady annual growth rate of 13 per cent.

★ ★ ★

Italy's fascists got beaten royally in the last round of municipal elections. Even Alessandra Mussolini, in spite of her looks, bit the dust.

★ ★ ★

Israel and the PLO have a peace agreement, but you would never know it from living in Hebron, where they keep killing each other. The Gaza strip has suffered its worst violence since the pact was signed.

★ ★ ★

News from La Belle Province: Montreal parking metres went from 25 cents to 50 cents an hour; Parizeau, the PQ's head honcho, also known as Frere Jacques, said that the eventual referendum question will be somewhat like this: "Do you want Quebec to be a sovereign country?"

Illegal cigarette trade is depriving the Quebec treasury of roughly $500 million a year. Bourassa will send Treasury Board President Daniel Johnson (the one with the charisma of a hibernating bear) to the First Ministers Conference on Dec. 21.

★ ★ ★

France keeps fighting to exclude culture from the GATT agreement. If the French cultural elite had their way the country would be cleansed of Euro Disney, Coca Cola, hamburgers, blue jeans and all that "American corruption."

The United States is also locked in a bitter diplomatic fight with Germany over Bonn's determination to increase its economic and political ties with Iran in spite of America's campaign to isolate Tehran.

★ ★ ★

Two years after independence the Baltic nations are struggling to build their military forces. They have no air force and no navy and, in fact, remain hostage to their giant Russian neighbor.

★ ★ ★

The *United Church Observer* observes really well. It spotted a car in the parking lot of its national office in Toronto bearing a licence plate saying: "WHY SIN." Underneath the plate was a bumper sticker with the Ontario slogan, "Yours to Discover."

And the *Glasgow Herald* is quoted in Ben Wicks' *Book of Losers* with this jewel: "Strathcycle Regional Council's social work department has discovered 335 staff it did not know existed." There's a fair bit of that going around.

Carl Tuyl is chaplaincy co-ordinator in Canada for the Christian Reformed Church and is a member of the Ontario Multifaith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care.

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Editorial

How many wolves can a church afford?

Watching the CBC television airing of "The Boys of St. Vincent" last week left me with many disturbed feelings. The film tells the story of how priests physically and sexually abused boys in an orphanage run by the Catholic Church. The story was inspired by what has happened in similar institutions in Newfoundland and other places in Canada.

How can anyone trust a spiritual leader again after watching this program? I asked myself.

Combine these highly publicized stories of ordained "celibate" men abusing boys with the even more frequent occurrence of respected church members and leaders abusing or having abused their sisters, daughters or wives, and the inevitable result must be a crisis of trust in the church or even in Christianity.

Although I do not personally experience that crisis of trust at a deep level, I am baffled. I do ask myself sometimes, "Is there something inherent in the nature of church that allows it to be both a place of safety and one of danger?

It is actually reported...

Church is supposed to be a haven for sinners; repentant sinners, that is. But who except God can truly monitor repentance? How many wolves in sheep's clothing are taking up seats in the sanctuary or council room?

Why can't the church be more a fellowship of people who have understood the words of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery by a bunch of hypocritical religious leaders — "Go now and leave your life of sin"? Part of the church is the woman caught in adultery, it seems; part is the bunch of hypocritical leaders.

Paul established the Corinthian church some 50 years after Christ left this earth. How much closer to the fire can you be as church? Yet in one of his letters to this church Paul says, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: a man has his father's wife."

How can that be? A fresh, new church consisting of people who have consciously turned their backs on the idols of their time, and already there are reports of incest!

This troubles me. I don't expect a church to be perfect. We need to repent daily of our sins. But I don't expect a church to harbor corruption. Somehow a church has to rise above the level of its surrounding society, not sink below it.

Did the parable of the wheat and tares growing up side by side apply to the church as well as to society in general? Or are believers missing an important tool of discernment so that people are able to put on a mask and go through the routines of respectable church membership?

Is the institutional part of being church too strong so that the personal part of integrity gets blown out of the water?

The critical factor

When I reflect on the nature of faithful churches I realize that sin is never absent. But I have discovered that the real fly in the ointment is not committing specific acts of sin, though that is bad enough; it's covering up sin and wallowing in it. The real problem is HYPOCRISY. An open community that confesses its shortcomings and transgressions to each other is not going to become a cesspool of corruption.

Hypocrisy, not just immorality, is what allowed places like Mount Cashel in St. John's, Newfoundland, to deteriorate into offensive and destructive institutions.

BW

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Don't underestimate sexual sins

Does the church focus too much on sexual sins? When a person commits adultery, he is almost automatically disciplined. When she cheats on her income tax, she may or may not be reprimanded.

But should we be so critical of this special status given to sexual sins?

The Apostle Paul warns the Corinthians "to flee from sexual immorality." And then he adds a curious statement: "All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?"

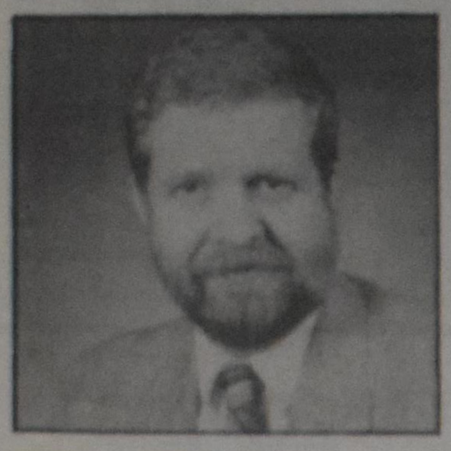
Sins against the body are very serious indeed. Sins against the body are also sins against the person's mind and soul, in addition to being sins against the Holy Spirit.

Our society has cheapened sexual activity to the point where it does not recognize the harm that can be done to a person's soul. It thinks that sexual activity between consenting adults is all the protection one needs. God says, No, you need the protection of sexual activity between *committed* adults. Marital commitment protects better than consent, though that must be present, too.

I wonder if Paul's message does not anticipate the fairly recent discoveries by psychologists that sexual abuse does immense damage to a person's soul. Victims of abuse can suffer physical and mental trauma decades after the abuse has taken place.

He who sins against his own body breaks down the temple of the Holy Spirit. But he who ravages someone else's temple does even greater damage.

BW



Society in FOCUS

Jake Kuiken

Individual casework or community development?

How do you help those who need it?

My most recent column described two friends. The first is a single mother who was cut off welfare as part of the Alberta government's drive to reduce its deficit. She and one of her sons suffer from a disabling condition that can only be controlled effectively by some very expensive medication. But because she can't afford her portion of the cost, both of them must accept less effective medication and suffer with the consequences.

My other friend is well ensconced in the oil patch, with all the privileges it brings. His family lives in a very stylish home in an upscale neighborhood and enjoys all the luxuries of a well-established, upper-middle class family. He's a very decent fellow, works hard, donates generously of his time and money and is quite willing to see services operate on a user-pay basis.

Social workers have traditionally dealt largely with clients such as my single-parent friend. While there are any number of ways in which services have been offered to such families, the services generally take either a casework or a community development approach.

Both methods have something to offer and have experienced their own moments of popularity within the profession. Although the community development approach is on the rise again, the casework method still dominates.

Focuses on individual problems

Social casework, including most of its variants, focuses on individual problem situations. With my single-parent friend it involves finding a solution to a need for better and more expensive medication. For instance, locally there are foundations that will help children with a variety of special needs, including medication. Some social agencies have emergency funds that also might be available for special circumstances. And there are individuals, service clubs and churches which are willing to pick up the non-subsidized portion of the medication.

A good casework approach is likely to result in support for a client's difficulties in adjusting to insufficient income to meet his or her family's needs.

Looking beyond the client

The community development approach, on the other hand, places a much greater responsibility on the client, here, the single parent. Besides helping with a solution to the immediate need for money to buy the better medication, the social worker using this approach is likely to involve the client in a support group with other single parents.

Such a group might very well get involved in a community or co-operative kitchen program, some shared buying arrangements, a clothing co-op or any variety of mutual aid activities that might free up some of the family's funds for other needs, such as medication.

A support group is likely to assist its members in preparing for an appeal process, to restore full medical coverage for welfare clients with special needs. Political action, such as lobbying for better enforcement of maintenance payments by non-custodial parents, might well be yet another strategy for obtaining an adequate income for the custodial parent. Generally, a community development approach looks beyond the immediate problem and engages the client in finding solutions that are more long-term in nature.

Jake Kuiken is a registered social worker who lives and works in Calgary.

Book review accepts flawed arguments

The review of Clarence Boomsma's book *Male and Female, One in Christ: New Testament Teaching on Women in Office* (Nov. 19) praises an interpretation that is familiar to most and convincing to some but does not deal adequately with Paul's prohibitions.

The main thrust of this approach is that, for the sake of spreading the gospel, Paul did not want to go against prevailing social conventions. In other words, the man accused of turning the world upside down is telling his readers, "Don't upset the status quo."

The status quo back then was female subordination; the status quo now is egalitarianism. Back then it would have been culturally offensive to ordain women to office; now it is culturally offensive to exclude them from office. The church must adjust its practice to the situation in which it finds itself: that is the abiding truth Paul intended to teach.

This interpretation hangs on three badly frayed strands of argument.

People accustomed to women leaders

1. *For women to hold positions of religious leadership would have been unthinkable in the male-dominated culture of Paul's day.* This is simply not historically accurate. Many people at that time were accustomed to women as priestesses and cultic leaders. Many even worshipped female deities. Christian converts from Diana worship or from the Greek mystery religions may have found it harder to accept male-only leadership than to accept women serving as elders.

Or consider the Gnostic sects, which were straying from orthodox Christianity already by the end of the first century. The Gnostics denied the incarnation of Christ and rejected the authority of the Apostles' writings. The gnostic version of Christianity, as recorded in the Nag Hammadi documents, placed heavy emphasis on femaleness in deity and permitted women to hold priestly office. (It's no accident that feminist scholars attack the New Testament and look to Gnostic writings for inspiration.)

All this leads us to ask: At the time Paul prohibited female leadership was he trying to minimize offense by going along with a situation where male leadership was the only conceivable option? Or was he, in fact, speaking against a practice that was already common in the culture and religion of his day? Boomsma's argument rests on the former; historical fact points to the latter.

No temporary advice

2. *Paul's statements on women are parallel with his instructions to slaves.* Paul told slaves to remain in their place, but that doesn't mean he was approving or commanding slavery for all time. In the same way, goes the argument, Paul told women to remain in their place for the time being, but he was not thereby banning them from the church's ruling offices for all time.

This sounds persuasive until we compare the main passage on slavery with the main passage on women in office. Paul addresses slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:20-24. He instructs them to keep living in the social situation in which they find themselves, "although if you can gain your freedom, do so" (v. 21).

But in 2 Timothy 2:11-15, when Paul says that a woman should not "teach or have authority over a man," he doesn't add, "...although if you can teach and have authority, then do so." And he doesn't speak to women in terms of remaining in the social situation in which they find themselves. Instead, he appeals to creation, fall and redemption as the grounds of his prohibition.

Denial of inspiration

3. *Paul's appeal to Genesis 2 and 3 in 1 Timothy 2:13-14 is based on an interpretation of these passages that was current in his day.* So what? Does that mean Paul's interpretation is therefore incorrect or not binding for today? If that's the meaning, the argument is in treacherous territory. We're no longer saying we've misunderstood Paul's intention, but that the apostle himself was wrong, that modern scholars understand the significance of Genesis better than the divinely inspired apostle. That's a flat denial of biblical inspiration and authority.

Before we reject the church's historic understanding of these passages and change a practice that has lasted for more than 19 centuries of the church's life, we're going to need better reasons than the familiar and flawed arguments recycled in Adrian Helleman's review of Clarence Boomsma's book.

David Feddes
Tinley Park, Ill.

Did you know...

...that though the English vocabulary contains about 600,000 words, three different studies have shown that one fourth of all English-language conversation is built on just 13 words: the, be, it, have, of, and, to, will, you, is, in, that, a?

Our place and task in the environment **John Wood**

Manger management

Do you recall a Walt Disney cartoon with a stork who looks like a postal carrier, notebook in hand, checking off the bundles of joy he is to deliver? He bumbles along, mixing up the babies in a humorous but ultimately harmless fashion.

Although "Lambert, the Sheepish Lion" was a delightful story, somehow Baby Jesus never fit into the imagery. There was no mistake on that Christmas night, just the press of a busy world going about its business. The census was to be taken, the state tax-base strengthened, the economy boosted by the certitude of citizen numbers. It all sounds familiar, yet also foreign. We lurch along focused on the numbers — important ones like the jobless rate, prime lending rate, new housing starts and so on.

I started wondering: if Jesus came back tonight where would he choose to be born? Neither Canada nor the United States seems to be high on the list. What is it about our managing of our part of the world that makes our world less than attractive for the Savior's birthplace?

There is a certain foolishness about such musing in that they involve events that will never happen. My rational training urges me to get on with more productive lines of inquiry. Yet I wonder if this doesn't say something about us, about our alienation from the world, and not just the human world, but from all of creation.

"Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains; and the mountains, in reply, echoing their joyous strains." But where I live, you would likely never hear the angels or the mountains; it's too noisy. The cacophony of the urbanscape drowns all but its own. The wash of city lights dims the distant stars. Did you see the lunar eclipse this month? Even with astronomers and the evening news to tell us, many people missed it. Portents in the sky hold little magic for us. We know the mystery, or at least we know that *someone* knows it. And so it isn't nearly so magical as it once was.

The Creator's gift

It is hard for urbanites to hear creation praising its Creator. I think that Abraham would have understood our predicament. He left the city and made room to hear his maker's voice. We too should devise ways to hear wisdom and her handiwork speaking. In the days ahead we can all make time to see and hear creation. For some it might mean taking a few friends along and asking them to enjoy the beauty of the earth with you. A few will seek a solitary corner to view the world God created. Others might look for an organized group activity outdoors. It takes a conscious effort to do so but rewards us richly.

December is census time for creation's songsters. Local Audubon societies will be gearing up for their annual Christmas bird count; and you can help. All kinds of persons from novice to expert can participate in a one-day outing that is fun for all ages. If you have ever wanted to get beyond "robin," "blue jay," "duck," or "crow" to discover some of the more than 600 exotic birds in North America, this is a good way to do so. Contact a local naturalist club for information on a count in your area. There is one in almost every major city, and many smaller ones too.

The gift of creation is waiting for us, inviting us to take some time to revel in our Creator's good work.

John Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

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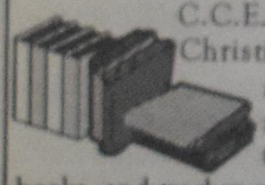

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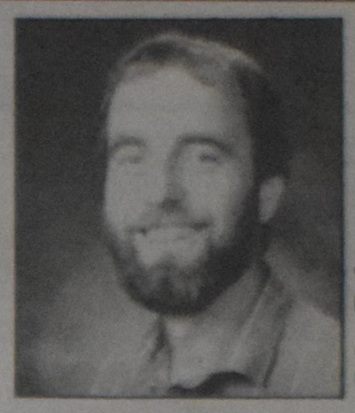
REFLEXION



John Byl

REFLEXION

Dedicated fans or what?

The stadium was easy to find as highway signs suggested the best exits. Flags and other paraphernalia adorned the vehicles of loyal fans. Approaching the stadium one felt the excitement. Traffic became more congested; more folks than usual briskly walked the streets this Saturday afternoon; people in parking lots were barbecuing steaks and drinking beer. As we waited to enter the stadium two jets flew past so low they could have been hit with a well-kicked ball — the two pilots were graduates from the universities playing that day.

The 60-year-old, semi-submerged stadium was packed with over 100,000 spectators preparing to watch a football game. (At $25 a ticket, gate receipts for one game would exceed $2 million.) Although the temperature was at the freezing mark and it was snowing, we remained warm. We wore long-johns, gloves and team toques and were wrapped in sleeping bags. Being surrounded by so many fans, the metal benches left no space between any of us. The legs of each person behind us provided our back-rests, while the people in front of us warmed our legs with their backs. With the constant murmur of banner-carrying planes above, the University of Michigan was about to play.

Michigan is not having its traditionally great season. Fans were restless when a poor play was executed, when substitutions were late in coming onto the field, and when the other team scored. But this game belonged to Michigan's electrifying back-up tailback, Tim Biakabutuka; he scored three touchdowns and his every carry was met with cheers of delight.

Those who listened to the game on radios in rec rooms where university blue and gold banners were enshrined must also have delighted in Biakabutuka's never-say-die playing as he bounced his way through the lines and into the end zone.

It is fun to experience communities rallying together around an athletic team, reflecting it in their homes, filling their conversations with the latest team events, delighting in the team's victories and jumping to their feet, clapping hands as they witness a play or score that brings their team closer to victory. Even the 230-person celebrated marching band pleaded at half-time for loyalty to the blue and gold.

What's more important?

It was like a religious festival — unfortunately, some of these people, and us, may have been swept up in it all too much.

We need to ask ourselves if we share the passionate cheers of the angels when a sinner is saved as much as we do our enthusiasm as sports spectators. Can we understand that we must also be Biakabutuka's in life, with Abraham as our coach and Christ extending his open arms to us at the goal line (Hebrews 12)?

We should consider if our church communities share the camaraderie and enthusiasm displayed by the U. of M. fans. We should also ask if we have witnessed Christ's birth in a stable and simply left him there. Or are we having happy tailgate parties preparing to meet Christ, with thousands around the world, as he returns to take his "fans" home?

John Byl teaches physical education at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont.

Cinema summaries

Marian Van Til

The Piano

Rated R
Stars Holly Hunter, Harvey Keitel, Sam Neill
Written and directed by Jane Campion

The Piano was written, produced and filmed wholly by New Zealanders; it stars three Americans, all the rest of the cast being either New Zealand aboriginals or white women; its subject is the mysterious and compelling ability of music to communicate; and this small, esoteric film is becoming a box office hit in North America.

Holly Hunter plays Ada, an Englishwoman who has not spoken since age six; neither she nor anyone else knows why. Unmarried, she has a daughter (probably 10 years old) whose father apparently left when the child was born. Her own father has now arranged a marriage for her to a New Zealander (Sam Neill) who has paid a dowry for her. The story presumably takes place sometime in the late 19th century.

Not being able to speak, Ada has adopted her own private sign language through which she "talks" with her daughter. But she can only express the real depths of her feelings through music. She plays the piano constantly, producing her own kind of meandering, sometimes dissonant melodies which are foreign and unsettling to her listeners.

When she arrives on the New Zealand beach at the edge of the jungle where her new husband, Stewart, is to meet her, her piano — an ornately carved grand — arrives with her. Stewart is dumbfounded; he refuses to have the hired men take the piano with them so it simply sits on the beach for a time, exposed to the weather and salt water.

At their new home Ada carves a piano keyboard into a tabletop and "accompanies" her daughter while she sings, leading Stewart to think that his wife may be slightly mad as well as mute. But another white man, Baines (Harvey Keitel), understands Ada's crucial need for music. Baines lives a semi-native existence alone in the woods. He strikes a bargain with Stewart: he will give him some land for the piano. So Baines has the huge piano lugged through the muddy jungle to his cabin — for Ada's sake, not his own. But it is agreed he will take lessons from Ada.

Filling a need

Baines is lonely and near-silent himself; he is peculiarly attracted to this silent and equally lonely woman who *needs* music — and he is drawn by the music she plays.

After making a bizarre and disturbing deal with her so that he can be near her, Baines relents, realizing he has begun to love her; the feeling soon becomes mutual.

The characters in this love triangle are not so simply or rigidly drawn that the audience feels there are "good guys" and "bad guys." We alternate between feeling repulsion and sympathy for each of the men, and between commiserating with and being greatly irritated by Ada (and her brash daughter).

The adultery that takes place has some initially severe — and odd — consequences. There is a climactic scene in which Ada makes a decision which forever alters her life.

The "R" rating was applied because the film contains several scenes of discreetly shot but full male nudity and one of partial female nudity.

The Piano is well-acted; writer/director Jane Campion took a chance casting Americans in the lead roles, but it paid off. The film is dramatically tight, emotionally engaging and thought-provoking. But it lacks a moral plane, despite the consequences of adultery it presents, which seem to be more circumstantial than moral.

Ironically flawed

The music itself, in the end, seems a kind of self-indulgence rather than a proper vehicle for self-expression, or for outward-(much less God-) directed expression. Ironically, the film's overall impact is greatly diminished by its flawed music.

The piano music chosen for the film was written by one Michael Nyman who, it turns out, is not a very good composer. His music consists of endless arpeggios, mediocre melodies, bad chord progressions and uninspired dissonances. In a word, it's mundane and negates the entire point of the film: that music is the most mysteriously powerful communication tool we human beings know. (At least this stuff is actually playable by Holly Hunter so she didn't have to fake it.)

Some of the hauntingly beautiful and melancholy piano music of major composers of the time — Chopin, Schubert, Schumann, and the list could go on — would have been perfect for the intent of this film, and would have significantly contributed to creating the intense emotional impact for which director Campion was obviously looking. But if Campion wanted to insist that Ada play "her own" music, surely a better composer could have been hired to provide it.

'Don't try this at home'

NEW YORK, N.Y. (EP) — The MTV cartoon series "Beavis and Butt-head" is being aired at 10:30 p.m. ET, more than three hours later than its previous time-slot. The change follows charges that the cartoon characters' obsession with fire has caused injuries and deaths in fires started by children imitating the anti-social main characters.

In Moraine, Ohio, a two-year-old child died in an Oct. 6 fire started by her five-year-old brother, who told investigators he watched "Beavis and Butt-head" playing with a lighter on the TV show.

On Aug. 28, the city of Sydney, Ohio, had a residential fire started by children using a lighter and an aerosol spray can to create a blow torch; they said they got the idea from "Beavis and Butt-head." In addition to moving the program to a later time, the rock video network has added a disclaimer, stating, "Beavis and Butt-head are not role models. They're not even human. They're cartoons. Some of the things they do would cause a real person to get hurt, expelled, arrested, possibly deported. To put it another way: Don't try this at home."

Christian artists hold exhibit in Australia

BALMAIN, Australia (EP) — An exhibit which opened Nov. 5 in Balmain, New South Wales, marked another successful step for Christian artists in Australia.

Henning International Galleries, a gallery for Christian artists, survived the worst recession in Australia in 60 years. During the recession, many art galleries were forced to close their doors, but in the past four years, the Henning Galleries staged 12 exhibits by Christian artists.

The new exhibition, titled "Unity," was previewed by corporate and diplomatic guests Nov. 4, and officially opened by Gregorie Bujac, U.S. Consul General.

Look for P & M next week

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To still the waters

Donna Vlaming

The miles roll beneath the wheels of our van, which is pointed towards New Jersey.

Yesterday my father gathered up a bottle of sleeping pills, a bottle of scotch, a glass, a book and a flashlight, along with what was left of his hope. He stepped outside, closed the kitchen door firmly and picked his way carefully down the rock path in the pre-dawn hour. The day promised to be chilly and grey. It held no promise for my father. Only the end was in sight.

Putting his belongings in the passenger seat of his old blue Saab, he began to pull the worn mattresses out of the back of his garage where he had stored them for the occasion. As my father closed the car door tightly and turned on the engine, he said goodbye to life.

It's hard to grasp my reverie, my study in brown, which quickly dulls into black.

"Do you want to stop soon for lunch?" he asks, watching me in the rear-view mirror.

"Please don't ask me to make any decisions."

I huddle a little further into the folds of a sleeping bag. My shroud.

Again my husband tries to draw me out. "How are you doing, honey?" he asks gently.

I bite back my anger, realizing that I must lean on Wayne. The hours pass by slowly.

I huddle a little further into the folds of a sleeping bag. My shroud.... I bite back my anger, realizing that I must lean on Wayne.

thoughts.

My son, Josh, announces: "I'm not sad."

I cry.

"When will we see Grandpa?" Josh wants to know.

"Sorry, Josh; Grandpa isn't there. We'll see lots of other people, but not your Grandpa Johnson."

My boys are behaving themselves as they sit in the confines of their car seats. The seem to know instinctively that Mommy is not really listening.... Or do they understand that I am not really here, except in body?

I see my father's face as he turns the sprinkler on us kids. His glee is as apparent as our own. I watch him gently rub Kitty's stomach as she arches her back in birth, expelling tiny, mewling kittens. I feel again the hug I received after Amber, my oldest child, was born.

Wayne interrupts my

I've left my whole support system behind in Canada. Even my teenage daughters are not here to share the burden, choosing to stay home instead of dealing with this horrible situation. It is their right.

I am angry that they do not want to accompany us, yet relieved that they are not coming with me. I'm not sure I could handle 11 hours of chatter and music.

God? Are you listening?

I want to know the reason for this wasted life. I need to know what

justified his decision. How can I know, when the act of suicide is the ultimate in self-destruction? How can I believe that my father has found peace at last?

Josh asks me where Grandpa is now. I tell him that Grandpa has gone to heaven. He wants to know if there is room for Grandpa there.

"Yes, Josh. There will be room."

He asks: "Does God have a big enough table to feed all the dead people?"

"Yes, love." I can barely speak through my pain. "A huge table."

In my mind's eye I try

to seat my father at that table. I watch as he looks around, food tray in hand, searching for an empty seat.

All the people of heaven stand, obstructing my view, as God blesses the meal.

Even I cannot face the thought that my father's soul will not be at rest. I'd like to believe that he lived his hell on earth, that he has found safety at last. It is not for me to know.

The Unknown recognizes my vulnerability; it tugs at my sanity. I draw away in horror, seeking the safety of my reverie. I want to go back into the

But with the Lord at my side, family and friends to surround me with support, and the love that comes through forgiveness, I will walk beside still waters.

tapes my mind has captured, but death laughs. Toothless, it gapes at me. Here and now I cannot achieve the numbness which has been my protection for so long.

During the last phone call I had with my father I asked, in utter frustration, whether he would kill himself that day.

"No," was his reply. "In two days."

After a year of his pathetic phone calls, of depression and remorse, I struck out in resentment at the fragments which were my father. I was tired of listening to the pitiful messages, when every time I tried to get him to face himself he would cower behind the pain or lash out in cruel rage.

In that phone conversation I implored my father to heal the troubled child hiding within the darkened corridors of his being.

A dam of emotion broke in him. He started hurling oaths at me. Venomous, poisonous language shot out at me across the phone line.

"I was the whipping boy," he spat across the phone line.

"Set him free, Dad. He needs to be loved."

"There is too much pain. It would kill me."

The bitterness consumed him. The rage took over. A sickness had enveloped this man who was my father. All that was left was cursing, foaming abuse. I hung up on it.

How was I to know that a week later he would be dead? All my life I will regret that our last conversation was so bitter, so full of anger and pain.

It was the last day of winter when my father took his life. An unexpected snowstorm blocked out the pre-spring sun which had shone so brightly the previous week. In blew the cold indifference, the bleak, unfeeling dullness which allowed my father to execute his scheme.

Was it the snowstorm that put him over the edge? I tell myself that if only he had been able to hold out for spring, he would have been OK. I long for it to be so.

As new life begins with the arrival of spring I mourn my father's passing.

I have a new respect for death.

As it takes a soul, death reaches out freezing tentacles to those who stand, reminiscing, at its edges. The cold permeates my marrow. I cannot get warm.

The spring sun pours through the van windows. Buds sit proudly along their branches. Birds sing cheerful refrains to entice the worms from their earthen beds. Green shoots push through the thin, white blanket of snow, in anticipation of the warmer days ahead.

Death holds me in its tight grip so that I watch the beauty of God's creation through narrowed eyes.

Forgive me, God. I am so angry.

The rage boils my blood even as my skin still freezes to the touch. Death, do not provoke me! I will push the fury out of my veins, making it thaw the chill. But not today. Today my body does as it pleases. I follow helplessly. Today I am a victim.

Mourning is so gradual. Like a great open wound, only a tiny piece heals each day. Sometimes, inadvertently, it is ripped open anew, exposing such raw feelings that I bandage it quickly and pray for a speedy recovery.

I have battled with God.

My anger at the injustice and untimeliness of my father's death are swords I hurl at my Savior.

I am rewarded, not with recriminations or guilt, but with a peace that comes from knowing that I have been honest and am learning to rely on others and God. He accepts me as I am. It is the ultimate forgiveness.

I look around me, realizing that my attitude and acceptance will make the difference in how I am affected by my father's death.

PHOTO: INGRID TORN

Through his passing I am able to reach out, to give to God, my family and those close to me, accepting equally from them.

I do not believe that my father's death was in vain. It broke the final chains which bound me in my bitterness.

As one who believes in Christ as her Savior, I know my life will always be full of challenge. But with the Lord at my side, family and friends to surround me with support, and the love that comes through forgiveness, I will walk beside still waters.

Donna Vlaming is a graphic artist and free-lance writer who lives in Aurora, Ontario.

And we know that all things work together for good, to them who love the Lord, to those who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28).

Church, Marian Van Til, page editor

What happened to 'religious' holidays?

A Presbyterian Comments

Robert J. Bernhardt

My childhood recollections of worship are drawn from my spiritual origins in a small Presbyterian congregation in a Scottish, Anglophone village in southwestern Quebec. Typical of a Quebec village there was only one church, but untypically in Athelstan, that congregation was Presbyterian.

To my young perceptions there were really only two special religious holidays in the year — Christmas and Easter. And from a child's viewpoint, the really big one was Christmas. Easter meant an extra-large attendance in the worship service, with certain people from the village conspicuous by their presence (which even a child could note without prompting). Christmas, however, was accompanied by Sunday school nativity plays, evenings of carol singing, and a general level of excitement that no child could escape. And Christmas was accompanied by a generous holiday from school (which was not unappreciated).

Glad to bypass Lent

As far as the rest of the year was concerned there were no other religious holidays. The closest was Good Friday, which was a day filled with religious significance but was celebrated privately. I don't remember our having a special Good Friday worship service, though perhaps that was just because we were but one of three congregations who shared the same minister.

Thanksgiving, while marked in church, was a sort of general community thing. Pentecost was an important day in the life of the church but not one which we commemorated annually. Epiphany and Ascension Day didn't register in my memories at all. And in our part of the world Lent was something big for the Roman Catholics, but to us, only a time to be glad you were Protestant (because during Lent, Catholics were each expected to forego something they enjoyed.)

Shaped by childhood attitudes

In many more ways than I consciously realize those childhood experiences have shaped how I think and feel today. I love Christmas, especially for its music and for the ways in which an extra spirit of compassion and concern seems to flood into the community and the church. I am deeply drawn into the emotions of Good Friday and Easter. However, these seasons also prompt regrets.

I regret the commercial exploitation of Christmas even as I regret that we as a Christian community are so absorbed in our own celebrations that we have little energy left to share with the world the real significance of the birth being celebrated. I regret that well-intentioned slogans like "Put Christ back into Christmas" and "Jesus is the reason for the season" often sound more like pronouncements of judgment than they do like invitations.

What about resurrection?

I also regret that somehow we have not been able to elevate Easter to a more publicly visible role in Canadian church life. The death and resurrection of Jesus certainly deserve as much attention as his birth. And given the reality of prevailing public sentiment, perhaps they are a little less open to distortion. Of course, avid merchandisers will miss no opportunity; and Easter already has been claimed by the candy and the clothing industries.

But somehow, the reality of death is not as easily sentimentalized as is the birth of a baby. Everyone can associate hope with the birth of a child, but our materialistic age is genuinely challenged by what to do with resurrection.

Robert Bernhardt is pastor of Chalmers Presbyterian Church, Hamilton, Ont.

Hundreds of Christians forced out of their homes in Mexico

Authorities refuse to intercede

Chris Woehr

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (NNI)—Municipal leaders in the highland communities of Mexico's southern Chiapas State are taking advantage of indifferent state and federal authorities to carry out what is becoming one of the most violent and massive forced expulsions of Protestants and Catholics in recent memory.

Since last June, 454 individuals from some 20 communities in the municipality of San Juan Chamula have been violently evicted from their homes, reportedly for converting to religions other than the traditional Chamula religion—most are Protestants, but about 30 per cent are Catholics.

Representatives of CRIACH, an organization which represents the interests of indigenous people in Chiapas, say authorities have failed to intervene in the violence which began shortly after the new municipal administration of San Juan Chamula took office June 26.

On Nov. 17, during a visit to Chiapas, Graciela Vega Carrillo and Rosa Isabel Estrada of Mexico's Human Rights Commission were informed by CRIACH that the state government does not have the political will to stop the expulsions.

Evidence of the forced expulsions was presented to the commission, including photographs of some 40 homes which were burned down in the communities of Bapot and V'tameste' as recently as Nov. 14.

An ongoing struggle

Presbyterian cleric and attorney Abdlas Tovilla Jaime, of the State Council for the Defense of Evangelicals in Chiapas, has asserted that "the governor has made it clear that he will not apply the law because it won't resolve the problem."

An expert observer in Chiapas, who asked not to be named, confirmed that Chiapas Governor Elmar Setzer's attitude and response to the expulsions "has been very discouraging, if not infuriating."

Most of the exiles are Presbyterians, as well as a number of Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists and Catholics in disagreement with the actions of the San Juan Chamula authorities. President Lopez Ruiz has reportedly threatened that anyone caught reading the Bible in Chamula territory will be expelled.

All of the exiled believers have taken refuge in the headquarters of the Office of Indigenous Affairs in San Cristobal de las Casas in an effort to make a united protest before state authorities. Over the past 25 years, Protestant exiles from hostile communities have taken refuge in what have become permanent settlements in the countryside near San Cristobal. Since the mid-1960s, some 25,000 indigenous believers have been forcibly evicted from their homelands for the sake of their faith.

The most recent exiles fled with little more than the clothes on their backs. A number of women were reportedly raped; and one pregnant woman, who was beaten as she fled her village in early November, gave birth to a baby who died within hours of being born.

A written plea was sent to state authorities by a number of expelled women from San Juan Chamula. They explained the difficulty of their plight and requested intervention — to no avail.

Last September, representatives of the exiled believers presented Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari with written statements concerning the evictions during a visit he made to Chiapas. However, Salinas has not responded to their concerns.

National Protestant leaders in Mexico took up the matter with the Salinas during a meeting scheduled for December 7. There is no word yet of the outcome.

With reporting by correspondent Elizabeth Isais in Mexico City.

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Poll finds more Americans see God as judge than as forgiver

GLENDALE, Calif. (EP) — The idea that God will judge all people is strongly engrained in Americans. According to the Barna Research Organization, 86 per cent of Americans believe God will judge people, and 74 per cent believe this strongly.

Belief in God's judgment is strongest within American Christianity. Regular church attenders, members of the major Christian denominations and "born again" Christians all agree significantly more than American adults as a whole that God will judge all people. Only six per cent of churched people (Protestant and Catholic) disagree that God will judge all people, compared to 10 per cent of all Americans. The belief is strongest among evangelicals and "born again" Christians. Only one per cent of "born again" Christians do not believe in God's universal judgment of humanity.

Christians tend to believe that the God who judges universally also forgives completely. Among all churched Americans, among Protestants and among "born again" Christians, stronger belief in God's judgment of all people is accompanied by stronger belief in God's ability to forgive all sins. This sentiment is shared most widely among "mainline" Protestants (72 per cent) and evangelicals (72 per cent).

Yet the correlation between God as judge and God as forgiver of sins is surprisingly weak. While Christians are much stronger believers that God will eventually judge all people, they believe in God's complete forgiveness at only moderately higher rates than the public as a whole.

Some 28 per cent of Protestants, and 27 per cent of "born again" Christians believe that God cannot forgive all sins. This rate is barely different from the rate among all Americans (32 per cent). Among Catholics and Baptists, two of America's largest religious groups, belief in God's ability to forgive all sins is no different than among other Americans.

Grace is precarious

"The idea of Judgment Day is very firmly implanted within the church in America," said George Barna, president of the Barna Research Group. "The notion of God's grace is in a much more precarious position. If Christian leaders are trying to fight two opposite errors, universalism and legalism, these attitudes indicate that they may be winning the former battle but are probably losing the latter."

Barna continued, "It is also likely that this distortion is reducing the ability of the church to reach those outside it. Among unchurched adults, a huge percentage — 40 per cent — believe God is not able to forgive all sins. These people are hearing messages of judgment from the church but not messages of forgiveness. Is it such a surprise that they are staying away?"

There are signs that Americans' views of God's justice and mercy are skewed not just along religious lines, but along educational and economic lines as well. At the extremes, attitudes toward God's judgment and forgiveness vary decidedly. Americans with no college experience who earn less than $20,000 per year are more than four times as likely to believe in a God who judges all but cannot forgive some sins and crimes (41 per cent compared to 9 per cent), and less than one-seventh as likely to have an opposite view rejecting both universal judgment of humanity and the possibility of forgiveness for any sin or crime (2 per cent compared to 15 per cent). Fewer than half (46 per cent) of the former group hold the common Christian view of a God who will judge all but can forgive anyone's sin, as opposed to two-thirds (66 per cent) of the latter group.

"People see a tension between the idea of God as judge and the idea of God as Savior," said Barna. "The idea that one is accountable for sins that are unforgivable is a heavy burden to bear throughout one's life, and three in eight Americans earning $20,000 a year share that burden. These are people who already lead especially hard lives. A crucial element of the Christian Gospel is somehow failing to reach the most religious part of America."

Christian curriculum draws criticism in Sudan

KHARTOUM, Sudan (EP) — Attempts to introduce Christian curricular materials for the first time into Sudanese primary and secondary public schools have elicited guarded reactions from the country's churches, with strong opposition expressed in Roman Catholic circles, according to the Nairobi-based Africa Press Service (APS).

According to Abdel Basit Sabdarat, Sudan's minister of education, the introduction of the Christian materials was done in consultation with the Sudan Council of Churches. The ministry of education and SCC were to print and supervise the materials. While no individual churches were involved in the planning, Sabdarat told APS, the materials were drawn up in accordance with the government's educational policy. That policy "aims at equipping the country with religious philosophy, creating perfect human values, instilling religious values and transforming education from mere privilege to the right of every citizen," APS said.

Catholic bishops are expected to discuss the issue at their conference this month. The Episcopal Church of Sudan, Africa Inland Church, Seventh-day Adventists and other denominations are still debating the introduction of Christian education into the public school curriculum.

Women's ordination clears final hurdle in England

LONDON, England (EP) — With the Nov. 2 passage by Britain's House of Lords of a measure that will allow the ordination of women priests, the Church of England jumped its final hurdle in its effort to ordain its first women priests shortly after Easter 1994. It is thought that there are about 1,000 women deacons awaiting ordination. The Church of England voted by a narrow margin to ordain women in November 1992, causing considerable controversy and provoking the decision among many male priest opponents to leave the Church of England ministry and seek acceptance into the Roman Catholic Church. Between 250 and 500 are expected to leave within the first year, but some believe that number could increase to about 1,000.

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Books/Meditation

A church on earth for all nations

No Longer Strangers: Ministry in a Multicultural Society, by Romney Moseley. Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1993. ISBN 1-55126-049-2. Softcover, 96 pp., $10.99. Reviewed by Robert VanderVennen.

The Anglican Church started out as a church for Britons. But today, as Primate Michael Peers says in his foreword to this book, on any given Sunday most of the people in the Anglican Church throughout the world are not of British ancestry.

Do Christians want to worship in congregations of people from many races and cultures? It would seem not, if you see the racially segregated worship services of any Sunday morning.

Underlying this book is the conviction that in areas where people of many cultures live together, those diverse people should welcome each other in communal worship.

"It is God who calls people of all races, languages and cultures into a community of faith where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female," as the Anglican General Synod of 1992 put it.

But do Anglicans want to worship with people of other cultures? A study was undertaken to find out. A questionnaire was sent to randomly selected congregations. "Focus groups" were formed to give input through discussion.

The study showed that most Anglicans feel good about multiculturalism but they are markedly divided about the seriousness of racial prejudice in the church.

Many Anglicans who are not of British origin experience coldness, alienation and marginalization in their church in Canada, especially in the rejection of their gifts for leadership.

Small homogenous congregations of people of ethnic minorities have survived against great odds and much official discouragement. Most Anglicans are against separation in worship for different ethnic groups. They want "to move beyond the present paternalism to a church which accepts the gifts and graces of all Christians."

A recognized problem is that for minority cultural groups to be one in ministry with a majority, the minorities are pressed to become just like the majority, with loss of all distinctive character.

The point of reflecting on a book like this is to examine our own attitudes and compare them with the group studied. How do I as a Christian Reformed person or you in your denomination — and we together — compare with Anglicans on multicultural ministry? There may be a difference between the way we feel about it and what we know to be right. Can people of other cultures feel at home in your and my church? Do we want them to? Do we all want to worship together on earth in the way we will in heaven (Rev. 7:9)?

Dordt prof researches with noted scientist in Scotland

Robert VanderVennen, with files from Sally Jongsma

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — Dr. Paul Moes of the psychology department of Dordt College spent 14 months in 1992-93 doing research on the human brain with leading neuropsychologist Dr. Malcolm Jeeves at St. Andrews University in Scotland.

Jeeves, one of few prominent brain experts who is also a Christian, is editor of the prestigious journal *Neuropsychologia* and co-author of the Christian College Coalition book *Psychology Through the Eyes of Faith.*

In studying people with learning disabilities, Moes worked on communication pathways between the right and left hemispheres within the brain which may be the cause of their problems. "Many people diagnosed with learning disabilities are very intelligent people," said Moes. "They simply have difficulty coordinating the learning steps, possibly because the information is not properly transferred."

The work that Moes and Jeeves did points to the important role these pathways play in perceiving, thinking and learning.

A chance to teach too

Moes met Jeeves several years ago at a conference, and then again when Jeeves spoke at Dordt four years ago. Moes focused his research on people who were born without the connecting link within the brain, adding his results to work already done by Jeeves. Moes also gathered data on the effect aging has on information transfer.

Moes also had an unexpected chance to teach at St. Andrews when Jeeves was forced to take a leave of absence due to illness. The students enjoyed Moes's interactive teaching style in contrast to the less involved style of some of the professors who are so absorbed in research that they give little attention to effective teaching.

Moes reports that during daily afternoon tea breaks Jeeves participated in some wonderful conversations on such matters as relating brain function, human behavior and Christian faith. Jeeves said that "Christians need to be in the middle of what's happening in the world — not just standing on the sidelines." Moes has carried fresh enthusiasm back to Dordt College as a result of his experiences in Scotland.

van der Woerd
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'Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding'

"Go up on a high mountain, messenger of Zion. Shout as loud as you can, messenger of Jerusalem! Shout fearlessly, say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God.'" (Is. 40:9).

My all-time favorite hymn, bar none, is the advent hymn "Hark! A Thrilling Voice is Sounding" [*Psalter Hymnal* 332]. The hymn begins with the triumphant announcement of Christ's approach.

Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding!/"Christ is near," we hear it say./"Cast away the works of darkness,/all you children of the day!"

Startled at the solemn warning,/from the darkness we arise;/Christ, our sun, all ill dispelling,/shines upon the morning skies.

The source of the "thrilling voice" is not specified. Is it an angel, speaking from heaven? Is it the Father himself, announcing the coming of his son? The voice of the prophets or the voice of the church? The hearers in the hymn are not sure where the voice comes from.

The voice invites an active, even impulsive, response. The works of darkness should be "cast away," not just set down or renounced. It is as if Christ's coming turns on the lights in a dark room and we discover that we are holding something repulsive, which we throw from us in sudden disgust. We are startled into wakefulness and look up to see the rising sun dawning upon us.

An encounter with God is a form of awakening. We come to after a long, feverish sleep plagued by nightmares and discover that we are twisted in the bedclothes, our hearts pounding, the image of some imagined pursuer still vivid. But see, the sun is up, the day is bright! Christ, our sun, dispels all ill. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

But what if the coming day reveals that we are *perpetrators* of evil rather than its victims? What if dreams of hatred or desire are still clear in our minds when we awake, dreams which we cannot or will not fully renounce? Even then, this hymn leads us to welcome the coming of the light, to respond with relief and repentant joy.

See, the Lamb so long expected/comes with pardon down from heaven./Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,/one and all, to be forgiven;

so when next he comes in glory/and the world is wrapped in fear,/he will shield us with his mercy/and with words of love draw near.

Christ is near, not as an avenging presence but as a humble baby born out of God's great love for us. The astonishing result of this first coming is that we can now look forward without fear to his second coming. Although he will come again in glory and judgment, and although we have every reason to shrink from such a prospect, we are invited instead to run to him, because he comes to us with pardon and healing.

Somewhere today, as every day, a thrilling voice is sounding, telling us of Christ's nearness. Perhaps it is the voice of a friend, a family member or a pastor. Perhaps it is the voice of Isaiah, Luke or Paul; or the voice of creation; or of an ancient Christian hymn. Whatever voice it is, may you hear the Good News, and may that news thrill you. Here is your God! Christ is near!

Laura Smit is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Clayton, N.J.

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Christmas Greetings

BOEYENGA:
Instead of cards, due to difficult eyesight:
To all my relatives and friends, have a thankful celebration of Christmas.
Mrs. Patricia Boeyenga, 480 Elliot Avenue, Apt. 307, Kingston, ON K7K 6J9

Christmas Greetings

PASMA:
A blessed Christmas and a happy New Year to all friends and relatives. May God bless all of us in the coming year.
Alice Pasma, R.R. #1, Springfield, ON N0L 2J0

PASMA:
We wish all our relatives, friends and acquaintances a joyous and blessed Christmas and also the Lord's blessing in the year 1994.
George and Alice Pasma, 263 Clark Rd., London, ON N5W 5E7

ZANDBERGEN:
To all my children, grand- and great-grandchildren, my friends and neighbors.
I wish you all a very blessed and joyful Christmas, and a new year filled with the Lord's goodness.
Joan Zandbergen.

Marriages

WASSENAAR-BROUWER:
With thankfulness to God for bringing them together, we are pleased to announce the marriage of our parents and grandparents,
JANE WASSENAAR
and
PETE BROUWER
This marriage will take place, D.V., Jan. 8, 1994, in the Wellandport Orthodox Ref. Church, Wellandport, Ont., at 2:30 p.m., Rev. J. Gangar officiating. Open reception following ceremony in the Wellandport Chr. School Gym.
May God bless and keep you both in His loving care in your married life together.
With love from your family:
Sid & Carol-Ann Brouwer — Mt. Hope, Ont.
Matthew, Jordon, Krista
Ben & Jean Brouwer — Mt. Hope, Ont.
Michael, Laura, Jeremy, Nicholas, Luke, Kevin
Flory & Charlie Fluit — Mt. Hope, Ont.
Rebekah, Jim, Philip, Miriam
Wenda & Jim Veldman — Wellandport, Ont.
Georgina & James
Marion & Richard Rahm — Wellandport, Ont.
Stan & Susan Brouwer — Mt. Hope, Ont.
Jessica, Esther
John & Henrietta Wassenaar — Wainfleet, Ont.
Janine, Garret, Jonathan
Frances & Sid Bosma — Caledonia, Ont.
Charlene & Tim Vandenende — Wellandport, Ont.
Mirinda
Gerald & Bev Brouwer — Mt. Hope, Ont.
Janelle
Willy & Jane Wassenaar — Wellandport, Ont.
Home address: 4963 Canboro Rd., R.R. #3, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0

Anniversaries

Bergum, Fr. Cayuga, Ont.
1943 December 30 1993
With praise and thankfulness to God we are happy to announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,
JELLE and SHIRLEY BERGSMA (HOEKSTRA)
With love and best wishes:
Bob & Wilma VanDerKooi — Chilliwack, B.C.
Shane & Noga, Stacy & Julie
Ted & Pat Bergsma — Calgary, Alta.
Wendy & Ryan
George & Sheila Bergsma — Burks Falls, Ont.
David & Liss, Paul, Bradley, Jodi & Amanda
Ken & Joan Horlings — Bradford, Ont.
Cheryl & Craig, Melanie, Jennifer & Lori
Frank & Sheila Bergsma — Peachland, B.C.
Tammy & Tonny, Terry Linn & Richard
Doug & Millie Dennis — Nanticoke, Ont.
Jeff & Criss
Dale & Elaine Money — Sundridge, Ont.
Nathely, Tracy, Shawn & Holly
Allan Bergsma — Emsdale, Ont.
Denniell
Open house in York Chr. Fellowship Hall from 2-4 p.m., Dec. 30, 1993.
Home address: #1 Robert Dell Court, Apt. 104, Cayuga, ON N0A 1E0

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Jelle and Shirley Bergsma (Hoekstra) on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary!

Marriages

STREEF-DE JONG:
Adrian and Dirkje Streef, and Andy and Martha De Jong are happy to announce the marriage of their children,
THERESSA
and
KELLY
on Jan. 15, 1994, at 1:30 p.m., the Lord willing, in the Covenant Chr. Ref. Church, at Lansdowne Avenue, Woodstock, Ont.
We wish them God's blessing.

Personal

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Anniversaries

With great joy and praise to the Lord we wish our parents,
ALBERT and ALIDA DREISE (nee HOFTYZER)
a happy 30th anniversary on Dec. 27, 1993. We would like to thank you for everything that you have done for us.
We pray that the Lord will continue to keep you in his loving care. We also would like to congratulate Dad for 25 years in the ministry.
With love, your family:
Jonathan & Sharon — Fordwich, Ont.
Geoff & Jennifer (girlfriend)
Fred
Tim
Randal
Home address: 27 Oak Ave., Dundas, ON L9H 4Z1

Anniversaries

London Ottawa
1953 December 19 1993
With praise and thanksgiving to our gracious God, our parents (and Opa and Oma) will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary on, D.V., Dec. 19, 1993.
JERRY and MIEN MORSINK (TENBRINKE)
Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren.
Eric & Linda Morsink — Cambridge, Ont.
Richard & Caroline Morsink — Montreal, Que.
Hendrik, Terrance, Annelies
Everett & Belinda Dykstra — Surrey, B.C.
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Classifieds

Anniversaries

Leeuwarden Willowdale
1953 December 28 1993
With praise and thanks to God, we hope to celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

PIETER and HILDA VAN DER VEEN
(nee VAN GENNEP)

"In him our hearts rejoice for we trust his holy name. May your unfailing love rest upon us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you" (Ps. 33:21-22).
With love from the children and grandchildren:
Rita & Gary (friend)
Theo & Ellen
Joel, Peter, Carolyn
Ed & Anna
Christopher, Darren, Nicole, Joshua
Jacky
Open house on Dec. 28, 1993, from 2-5 p.m. at Willowdale Chr. Ref. Church, 70 Hilda Avenue, Willowdale, Ont.
Best wishes only please.
Home address: 217 Moore Park Avenue, Willowdale, ON M2M 1N5

Obituaries

1916 - 1993
On Saturday, Nov. 27, 1993, the Lord took his child and faithful servant

DIRK KAPTEIN

to the place he prepared for him (John 14:1-3).
Loving husband of Heiltje.
Father of:
Grace & Jack Moerman — Redwater, Alta.
Nelly & Bill Glaubitz — Morinville, Alta.
Leah & Wayne Prins — Edmonton, Alta.
John & Dawn Kaptein — London, Ont.
Opa (Grandfather) of 13 grandchildren.
Brother to six sisters and four brothers in the Netherlands.
The funeral service was held at Trinity Chr. Ref. Church, Edmonton, Alta., on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 1993, at 1 p.m., Rev. A. Groen officiated.
Correspondence address: 6511-133 Ave., Edmonton, AB T5A 0K6

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Obituaries

1956 - 1993
"...In their hands they're holding palms of victory..."
On Dec. 2, 1993,

IRENE BAKKER (VERMEER)

was called to join the multitude that worships before God's throne.
She was greatly loved and will be sadly missed by her husband Sid and daughters Jessica, Alison, Ginelle and Karina of Fonthill, Ont.
Irene will be greatly missed by her parents-in-law Simon and Irene Bakker of Calgary and sisters and brothers.
Arend & Doro Bakker — Nanaimo, B.C.
Jennie & Ralph Liesemer — Cochrane, Alta.
Dirk & Jenny Bakker — Rocky Mountain House, Alta.
Clara & Lloyd Copithorne — Cochrane, Alta.
John & Linda Bakker — Calgary, Alta.
Ellen & Brian Engbers — Calgary, Alta.
David & Liz Bakker — Spruce Grove, Alta.
and 25 nieces and nephews.
We pray for God's comfort and mercy for Sid and the girls.
"He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust" (Ps. 91:1).

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place through all generations..." (Ps. 90:1).
On Thursday, Dec. 2, 1993, the Lord in His wisdom took unto Himself,

IRENE SOPHIA BAKKER (VERMEER)

in her 38th year.
Irene's love and concern for others, her encouraging smile, and her enthusiasm for life in the Lord were a source of inspiration for all who knew her.
Loved, missed, and remembered by her husband:
Sid
and their daughters:
Jessica, Alison, Ginelle, Karina
her parents:
Gerrit & Nel Vermeer — Welland, Ont.
her sisters, brother, and their families:
Margaret & Bert Boverhof — Welandport, Ont.
Mark, Andrea, Reuben, Ryan
Karin Vermeer — Fonthill, Ont.
Gerry & Cynthia Vermeer — Welland, Ont.
Stephanie, Gerrit
Lorraine & Bret Otte — St. Catharines, Ont.
and our special family friend:
Cathy Benjamins — Fonthill, Ont.
Memories of Irene will also be cherished by Simon and Irene Bakker of Calgary, all of Sid's family in Western Canada, by her many aunts, uncles, and cousins, both in Holland and nearby, and by her many close friends.
Correspondence address: R.R. #2, Welland, ON L3B 5N5

Obituaries

1896 - 1993
The Lord called home, in full assurance of her faith, on Nov. 18, 1993,

HENDRIKA HOFMAN
(nee POSTMAN)

at the age of 97 in Picture Butte, Alta.
Preceded in death by her husband Martin and 11 siblings.
Children:
Tymen & Cobi Hofman — Grand Rapids, Mich.
John & Bertha Hofman — Winterhaven, Fl.
Hildred & James Strikwerda — Holland, Mich.
JoAnne Hofman — Grand Rapids, Mich.
and 13 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.
Also survived by sister Mary (Bernard) Nieboer.
The funeral service was held on Thursday, Nov. 20, 1993, at the Chr. Ref. Church, Nobleford, Alta., Rev. James D. Zondervan officiating.
Correspondence address: Ty Hofman, 2705 Burton St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546

Jan ("Posjan") and Janna Postman with 13 children in a 1913 photo. Hendrika is the woman in the top left corner.

Hendrika Postman *came to Canada in 1904 at age seven, one year before Alberta was granted provincial status in the Dominion of Canada. She was the eldest daughter of Jan ("Posjan") and Janna Postman who came from the Netherlands with seven sons and two daughters. They homesteaded west of Lethbridge.*
When the Nieuw Nijverdal Christian Reformed Church was organized in the Monarch/Granum area on Nov. 16, 1905, Hendrika was accepted as a charter (baptized) member. It was the first Christian Reformed church to be organized in Canada. She continued as a member of that church (now Nobleford CRC) till her death on Nov. 18, 1993, a total of 88 years.
She married Martin Hofman on Nov. 18, 1921, and they farmed in the area for 45 years. He preceded her in death in 1970. She was active and involved in the family and in the senior citizens' home where she lived till September. After being confined to nursing home care, she rather quickly lost her mobility and became weak and frail. She died peacefully on what was the 72nd anniversary of her marriage.
Her death marks the end of an era that began with the pioneer experience in the settlement in the Canadian west and the establishment of the CRC in Canada. She was the last charter member of the first church and the last of the original Dutch settlers. With her death a chapter in history has, in a sense, been closed. She was one of those saints who left a legacy of commitment and devotion to faithful living to inspire the generations who follow them. Long may their memory live!

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Red Deer Chr. School
14 McVicar St.
Red Deer, AB T4N 0M1
Att.: Mr. R. Duggan
Phone: (403) 346-5795

RUTHVEN, Ont.: Emmanuel Christian Academy requires a **Teaching Principal** for 65 students, Grades PreK-8. The school is governed by a parental board. This position needs to be filled for the 1994-95 school year. Formal contract responsibilities begin on **Aug. 1, 1994.** Compensation is based on CSI recommendation including benefits. Contact: **Dr. Peter Kelton, Board Chairman, at (519) 322-1107 or Mrs. Velma McCombe, Principal, at the school (519) 839-4874. School address: 294 County Road 34 East, R.R. #2, Ruthven, ON N0P 2G0**

For Sale

Order your copy of
The Strength of Their Years
by Tymen E. Hofman

If you want to know more about the early pioneers who settled in southern Alberta. See the Hendrika Hofman (Postman) story elsewhere on this page.

Just send us $8.45 ($5.95 plus $2.50 for postage and handling) and we'll send you a copy of this fascinating book.

Stan de Jong, manager

Classifieds/Events

Events	Events	Events	Events

Calendar

Dec. 15-22 Christmas concerts by the Ontario Chr. Music Assembly, directer by Leendert Kooij, with Andre Knevel at the organ. **Dec. 15:** 8 p.m., Rehoboth CRC, **Bowmanville**, Ont.; **Dec. 18:** 8 p.m., Willowdale United Church (Kenneth Ave.), **Willowdale**, Ont.; **Dec. 22:** 8 p.m., Melrose United Church (86 Homewood Ave.), **Hamilton**, Ont. For tickets call (416) 636-9779.

Dec. 17 Annual candlelight service with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir," 8 p.m., Mount Hamilton CRC, **Hamilton**, Ont.

Dec. 18 Handel's "Messiah," presented by the Georgetown Choral Society, 8 p.m., Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont. Proceeds for the college.

Dec. 19 Annual candlelight service with the "Adoramus-Maranatha Choir," 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **York**, Ont.

Dec. 19 Christmas concert by the St. Catharines Male Chorus "Collegium Musicum," 1:30 p.m., St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 10th St., **Hanover**, Ont.

Dec. 19 Celebration honoring Dr. & Mrs. Kooistra (50 years in the ministry, 50th wedding anniversary), 10 a.m., Chr. Ref. Church, **Waterloo**, Ont. Info.: (519) 746-6752 or 743-6497.

Dec. 23 Christmas concert by the Christian choir "New Life" and the Garden City Men's Chorus, 7:30 p.m., Maranatha CRC, **St. Catharines**, Ont. Come and celebrate with us.

Dec. 27 Annual John Knox Chr. School hockey tournament, 7:30 a.m., at Double Rink Arenas (Jane St., just south of Hwy. 7), **Woodbridge**, Ont. Info.: Gary Maas, (905) 455-1886.

Jan. 8 "Breakfast of Champions," an in-depth, faith-stirring, practical Bible teaching experience conducted by Gerrit Verstraete. From 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Streetsville Physiotherapy, 190 Queen St. S., **Mississauga**, Ont. To register ($15), call (905) 567-8373 or 826-7404.

Jan. 24 The annual "Christianity & Culture" lecture, 8 p.m., Brock University, **St. Catharines**, Ont. Speaker: *The Banner* editor Rev. John Suk on "The language of white supremacist religion." For info. call Brock CRC chaplain Rev. Nick Overduin at (905) 688-5550, ext. 3134, or his home (905) 688-1280.

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Change in worship time

Grace Chr. Ref. Church, Welland, Ont.: Evening services will begin at 5 p.m. from September through May, but will remain at 7 p.m. during June, July and August. The morning service remains unchanged at 10 a.m. An open invitation is extended to all who wish to worship with the Grace congregation.

Dan Roorda, Clerk of Council.

The Impact of Evolutionary Theory: A Christian View

by Russell Maatman

Maatman, Dordt College emeritus professor of chemistry, explores the foundations of evolutionary theory and the influence of evolutionary thinking on a wide range of subjects, from psychology to art. Included is an analysis of the nature of science, a critique of the evolutionary scenario, and a discussion of differing views of the nature and place of human beings.
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Christmas Concert

by

The Ontario Christian Music Assembly

Wednesday, December 22, 1993, 8 p.m.
Melrose United Church
86 Homewood Ave., Corners of Homewood/Lock & Stanley Ave. Admission: Adults $10.00 - Students $6.00

Hamilton:
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Miscellaneous

AVAILABLE FOR CALL

The Council of the **First Chr. Ref. Church of Kitchener**, Ont., recommends the Rev. Dan Tigchelaar to the congregations of the Christian Reformed Church for a call. He may be contacted at **129 Meaford Drive, Waterloo, ON N2J 4K4.**
Phone (519) 888-6380.

Job Opportunities

PRINCIPAL

Clinton and District Christian School
Clinton, Ont.

We are presently looking for a qualified **principal** to assist us in providing Christ-centred education to our students. This is a 70 per cent administrative position and 30 per cent teaching. At the present time we have an enrolment of 222 students and a staff of 11 teachers. Send your resume to:

Mr. Gordon Kaastra
Box 545
Clinton, ON N7A 3X8

Applications must be received by January 10, 1994.

News

Moore's comments have value: Earthkeeping president

John L. Moore

...continued from p.1

think this view has much validity. "The curse comes," he says, "when we don't take care of the land. It comes when we are disobedient; then you see things like soil degradation." A curse on the land "is not some mystical thing," he adds.

Vern Gleddie, though, says Moore may be on to something. "We tend to make humankind central," he says. Gleddie says the Scriptures speak of the earth being the Lord's and God claims that this is "my land." "In that context," says Gleddie, "Moore's comments have some value."

Agrees with critique

Dr. John Wood, professor of biology and environmental sciences at The King's University College in Edmonton, says Moore is typical of at least some in the evangelical community. Wood, an American evangelical himself, says many of these issues simply haven't been thought through by Moore and others.

Wood did appreciate Moore identifying pantheistic religion as being the force behind extreme environmentalists. "He's got part of the message right," said Wood. He cites Moore's comment that "Nature religion is getting hold." Moore quoted one environmentalist who felt that spending time in the untouched forest was like the coming of the dove of peace. "Jesus Christ is the dove of peace," said Moore, "not a whiff of sage brush." "I have moments of epiphany too," he said in describing his time on the land, "but those are moments of gratitude, not moments of being touched by the dove of peace."

Wood says that's right on. Where he distances himself from Moore is "where do we take it from here." Wood's impression is that Moore hadn't thought beyond "If we raise cattle and it feeds people, our job is done."

PHOTO: ALMA BARKMAN

I will give the rain for your land in its season... that you may gather in your grain... *Deuteronomy 11:14*

Earthkeeping not a farmers union

John Pater

Last year, the Christian Farmers Federation of Alberta elected to change its name to Earthkeeping. But the change in name didn't mean the 18-year old organization was changing it's focus.

Vern Gleddie, the current president of the organization, says they simply wanted to emphasize that they are not a farmers advocacy group. "We're not a farmers union," he says. Gleddie says over their 18-year history they have never really been a lobby group for farmers. Instead they have dealt with food, agriculture and ecology issues.

Gleddie says these issues should not be left solely in the hands of farmers. "We want to make it more obvious that urban people are welcome and should get involved," he says. With the name change, Earthkeeping hopes to attract city folk and all those interested in keeping the earth.

An open letter to Ontario readers

At Redeemer College we are very happy that The King's College was successful in having its name changed to The King's University College. *Christian Courier* rightly mentioned in its report on this development (Dec. 3) that Redeemer College is having significant problems in receiving the same privilege in Ontario.

All those who were kind enough to participate in the current lobby to the Minister of Education and Training on behalf of Redeemer College already know that he is not supportive of our request that we be allowed to confer conventional university degrees on our students.

Since we have just begun our lobby and have no intentions of taking "no" for an answer, we would greatly appreciate the co-operation of CC readers in urging the ministry to revisit our request.

We reject the Minister's answer that "... the public is served by allowing only publicly funded institutions to grant degrees with secular designations...." Frankly, we have no idea what "secular" means in the context of what the minister says. Moreover, the Ministry itself has just recently granted the Institute for Christian Studies additional degree-granting powers without theological connotations. As well, Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., is privatizing its M.B.A. program while continuing to give a regular degree.

The Redeemer College community believes that it must ask the government to re-examine our request for ordinary degree-granting power and a name change. We are a bona fide undergraduate university which offers a legitimate liberal arts program and we are acknowledged by the Association of Universities and Colleges to be a university-level institution.

Please, join our lobby and write to:
The Honourable Mr. David Cooke, Minister of Education and Training
Mowat Block, Queen's Park, Toronto, ON, M7A 1L2

Send a copy to:
Mr. Bob Rae, Premier of Ontario, Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON, M7A 1A1
as well as to:
Henry R. De Bolster, Redeemer College
777 Highway #53 East, Ancaster, ON, L9K 1J4

Henry R. De Bolster
President Redeemer College

News Digest

Edited by Irene Bom

Redeemer chooses final four for president

ANCASTER, Ont. — Redeemer College released its short list of presidential candidates last week.

Going for the top from the inside are vice-president of academics and political scientist Justin Cooper, whose tie with Redeemer goes back to its beginning over a decade ago, and associate professor of history Jacob Ellens, who joined the university's faculty in 1987.

Other finalists for the position are Elaine Botha and Harold Heie. Botha currently heads the philosophy department at Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education in Potchefstroom, South Africa. She has done teaching stints at The King's College in Edmonton, Dordt College in Sioux Centre, Iowa, and Regent College in Vancouver, B.C. She researched at Redeemer's Pascal Centre last year.

Until recently Heie, a mathematics scholar, was dean and vice-president of academics at the Brethren in Christ-affiliated Messiah College in Grantham, Penn.

Half of the 32 initial nominees agreed to consider the position.

The next president will be announced after the final four pass through interviews in January by staff, faculty and student representatives.

Tofu for Fido and Fluffy

DENVER, Col. — Thousands of U.S. pets are becoming vegetarians, reports the *Globe and Mail.*

The vegetarians say the new diet cures animal ailments from allergies to diabetes. Some even swear that cats on tofu and bean sprouts become so mellow that they stop chasing mice.

Lorraine Sheppard, a Colorado massage therapist, insists that her two vegetarian dogs now "have more energy, more clarity of mind and a real peacefulness."